PIC BY PAUL CANTY

OUR ROG flaunts his charisma with teen sex symbol Barbi Benton

THE JOY OF SEX

It's less of the cosmic and more of the crumpet for ROGER GLOVER. By PETE MAKOWSKI

HI THERE pop pickers, tee hee.

Betcha didn't expect to see Rainbow rising up the swinging singles charts again, eh? I mean, a one off hit with a tastefully selected cover version ('Since You've Been Gone' to the ignorant ones) is fair enough, but two in a row, this is the business.

A gloriously pounding re-mix of 'All Night Long' culled from the equally magnificent 'Down To Earth' headcrushing long player is currently riding high in the good ol' dirty thirty, in fact edging its way towards top five position, proving no matter how turbulent their line up situation gets, Rainbow seem to be going from strength to strength. After seeing the band at the Empire Pool it's easy to see why.

No, I didn't go on the night of the missing encore and I must say I'm glad 'cos on Saturday Rocky Blackhead and his boys were on top form. The current line up (are you listening Mr Frame?) reads as follows: Don Airey (keyboards), Graham Bonnet (vocals), Roger Glover (bass) and of course the survivors Cozy Powell and Ritchie Blackmore, drums and guitar respectively.

This is undoubtedly the strongest line up yet with a gem of a find in Bonnet, who is surely one of the finest rock vocalists around. His range and power is demonic and knocks the current selection of bleating carpet chested macho Robert Plant lookalike pooftas into a proverbial cocked hat.

Also, the reunion of Glover and Blackmore is a joy to witness. Not only does Glover write, produce and play on everything the band do, on stage his sheer presence seems to make everything gel. He's probably the only bass player I've seen able to govern the proceedings with Blackmore on the same stage.

He *is* the governor.

GLOVER IS a nice geezer, whose as wise as his whiskers and a charmer to talk to. The first time I met him, a few years ago, he had retired from the ranks of Purpledom and seemed very comfortable in his new found role as producer, very successful too with bands like Nazareth, Judas Priest and Status Quo benefitting from his talent of being able to capture their raw power and turning it into a commercial prospect, which is what he's done with Rainbow.

I've got to admit I was quite shocked when he joined the band as he seemed to be quite happy with his new career, so my obvious opening question was what lured him back to the smell of sawdust and the endless trail of Holiday Inns, eh?

"When we were doing the album, there was no intention of me joining the band."

So what happened?

"Well I was just the producer, I got together with the Ronnie Dio line up and started writing material and rehearsing. After we'd been doing that for a couple of months it became obvous that there was a kind of rift between Ronnie and Ritchie, they both had ideas but there was a lack of communication. So I tried to be middleman and salvage the effort because it was definitely starting to fall on stony ground. But I wasn't successful in that because the band split up.

"When they started to get themselves together again they never settled on a bass player. Ritchie said to me one day 'do you fancy playing bass on the album and we'll figure out a guy for the road later on'."

I asked Glover if he ever thought he'd be playing heavy rock agin, 'cos if I can remember at one time he was planning to form a group with a similar feel to Little Feat, which is a long way from groups like Rainbow.

"I wouldn't have formed a band from scratch, it would have had to have been a halfway there band which Rainbow was. It was a golden opportunity for me to walk in and really help Rainbow get up there, so I jumped at it . . . well, I didn't jump at it, I thought about it for a couple of months 'cos I wasn't sure if it was the right thing to do."

ONCE RAINBOW had appointed Glover on bass they were still minus a vocalist and it wasn't for the want of trying, as Mister G pointed out.

"A singer to measure up to Rainbow's requirements was very hard to come by. We auditioned many singers, some really good ones, but they weren't quite right. Ritchie's always been an idealist and perfectionist. We listed all the requirements a singer should have and I think there was twenty eight of them. You're never gonna get anybody who supplies all that. I think what Ritchie wants is a guy like himself who can sing, which he'll never find 'cos there's only one Ritchie like there's only one of anybody else. However Graham fitted most of the billing, the main thing being that he had a good voice. He's also a good front man for the band plus he's got a fresh image."

Most of the album was recorded initially without vocals, and prior to Roger becoming a full time member.

"Obviously I was writer because there was no one else to do the writing with Ritchie. Ronnie did most of it before. When Graham joined he couldn't concentrate on writing as he was working at being a vocalist and so it was down to me to do the writing chore which I don't mind because I like writing. On the next album I'm gonna concentrate on forgetting who I am in the band."

Why?

"Well the problem of being the bass player in a band and the producer is that you lose a certain amount of objectivity."

So how about the next album? What lies ahead in Pandora's box of goodies?

"That I don't know. I'm looking forward to the next album simply because the band has been on the road for the last six months and a band that's been on the road knows more about each other. I'd like to see more input from other members but that's really down to Ritchie. As I said before he's an idealist and perfectionist and I remember my experience from the days with Purple. If I wrote something that he didn't like, he wouldn't play it whether it was good or not, he's hard to please and hard to work with in that respect."

Sounds like fun, so what's it like getting the old team back together again?

"It was a kind of change in roles because I didn't used to do the lyrics I did the music. In this instance it's Ritchie coming up with all the ideas and me doing the vocals. I try very hard with lyrics, in fact the title of the album is very apt because I had a lot of criticism with the previous albums. There was a lot of material I really like and 'Stargazer' to me is one of the best heavy metal tracks of all time, I can't fault it.

"There's still too much on the other album that wasn't good enough and I felt also it was all a bit too self important, the lyrics were too cosmic and the whole thing wasn't concerned with entertaining people so much as impressing people, and I feel that rock music should firstly entertain people and should only impress because it entertains. At the outtake you shouldn't start to impress people 'cause all you're doing is forcing your ego on people, self indulgent ego at that. The whole purpose of 'Down To Earth' was to bring the cosmic aspects of Rainbow down to earth.

"To me rock music is basically about one thing, excitement, but more than that it's about sex, or the biggest thing in it is sex. And listening to old Rainbow tracks anything relating to a boy/girl relationship was shrouded in mystery, there's no actual sex there, no animalism and that's what I try to bring into the music, whether I've succeeded or not I don't know."

GLOVER STILL wants to record solo albums.

"I treat that as a very spontaneous thing, whatever I happen to be feeling at the time, it could easily be heavy metal or even reggae or classical or whatever I fancy doing.

"Young kids come up and say, why don't these old superstars retire gracefully and all that. And that's exactly how I used to feel but I can't help who I am, I can't help the age I am, I can't change it so that kind of criticism doesn't affect me. I know that if the public didn't want to see me I would retire. But when it's justified by big audiences, great reaction, I can't see it's doing any harm, I'm not trying to scrape the barrel and make a living out of the past. I am trying to make a living out of the present."